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SUBJECT: FREEDOM HOUSE NATIONS IN TRANSIT REPORT: GEORGIAN
"DEMOCRACY SCORE" FALLS DUE TO NOVEMBER 2007 EVENTS

REF: TBILISI 1476

¶1. (U) Summary and Comment: Freedom House's 2007 Nations in Transit report released on June 24 covering the period of January 1, 2007 to December 31, 2007, gives Georgia a "Democracy Score" of 4.79, down from the previous year's score of 4.68. The study describes Georgia's hybrid system of democratic governance as representing a mixed picture, which became even less certain following the dramatic events of September-December 2007. The report notes the progress of President Mikheil Saakashvili's government since 2004 to strengthen public institutions, yet underscores that the government's stability and democratic character remain challenged and resulted in the subsequent political crisis in September-November. End Summary.

¶2. (U) The Nations in Transit report assesses the crisis at the end of November 2007 as a setback for Georgia's democratic development. The report's "Democracy score" is based on a scale from one to seven, with one being the highest score and is based on seven factors: national democratic governance, electoral process, independent media, judicial framework and independence, civil society, local democratic governance, and corruption. The first four factors worsened, while the last three areas remain unchanged. The worsening of the overall score is attributed to an unbalanced executive branch which was seriously challenged by opposition protests, the temporary suspension of pro-Opposition Imedi television and radio, and occurrences of violent and unconstitutional means against opposition figures during the Presidential elections. The period of the study ends January 31, 2007, and therefore does not reflect the Presidential or Parliamentary elections. The report in its entirety can be found at www.freedomhouse.org.

¶3. (U) The report was written by Ghia Nodia, currently the Minister of Education and Science, who during the period covered by the report led the Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy, and Development. He has also drafted the Georgian report for the last several years.

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